

Robert Stevens Warehouse
Bowen's Wharf
Newport
Newport County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-305

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS RI-305

ROBERT STEVENS' WHARF - WAREHOUSE
Cowley's - Bowen's Wharf Bldg. 1)

Location: Northwest corner of Bowen's Wharf.

Present Use: The ground floor is used as a garage. The two upper floors are vacant.

Significance: This is a typical shop and warehouse building on one of the large, fully developed wharfs characteristic of Newport's 18th century waterfront.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 18th century.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Not known.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a shop and warehouse building on one of the wharfs characteristic of Newport's 18th c. waterfront.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in good condition, the exterior maintained to keep out the weather. The lower two stories have been largely replaced by steel and masonry construction. The ground floor is used as a garage. The two upper floors are vacant.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular, 30'-4" x 20'-4". Some floor boards have been removed. Originally three-and-one-half stories.
2. Foundations: Later brick foundations.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Heavy timber frame and intermediate studs on upper floors covered with horizontal sheathing, 1" thick, random widths 11" to 18", covered with shingles or later vertical siding on the side walls, and with clapboards on the front wall showing 4" to the weather now painted light gray. This original construction has been for the most part cut away on the lower two floors and replaced by brick masonry walls on the sides, modern garage doors on the front, and on the rear wall moved slightly back to give greater depth with the upper original walls carried on a steel beam.

4. Structural system: Heavy timber structural system, principal posts 7" x 8" spaced 10', intermediate studs about 2-3/4" x 3-3/4" spaced 28" on centers. Floors carried on beams about 6" x 8" spaced 39" on centers spanning 20'. Gambrel roof rafters 5" x 6" with 4-1/2" x 5" collar beams on line with the floor beams.
5. Chimneys: One brick chimney inside the west wall with one flue.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Three modern sliding garage doors and one modern hinged door on south side.
 - b. Windows: Original windows on upper floors, 6' x 7" panes of glass, double hung with nine-light sash over six-light sash.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gambrel roof, asbestos shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Simple boxed eaves.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: No interior partitions. The original first two stories have been thrown together to give more height on the ground floor, with the original second floor removed and a new hung ceiling at a higher level added.
2. Stairways: Simple wooden stairway at the southeast corner only partially surviving, running from the level of the new hung ceiling over the ground floor to the fourth or attic floor.
3. Flooring: Original flooring consisted of two layers of boards, 1" thick, random widths 13" to 20", both layers running in the same direction, at right angles to the line of beams, with staggered joints.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: No interior wall or ceiling finishes -- structure exposed.
5. Windlass: A windlass is built-in in the fourth or attic floor for hoisting loads through trap doors to the upper floors. The windlass is made of wood and fitted to wooden members attached to the attic floor and roof structure. A 9'-10-3/4" wheel is used to turn an 11" drum around which the hoisting rope is wound. A large rope pulley which fitted the larger turning wheel and extended down through the lower floors was used for operating the windlass.

- D. Site: Orientation (by compass reading) and general setting: The long side of the building faces south onto the wharf. Originally it was one of a long row of buildings which survive only in fragments.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Newport HABS Project — 1969. Sponsored in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and Osmund Overby (University of Missouri), Project Supervisor Jack E. Boucher, photographer. Prepared by: Osmund Overby

National Park Service, July, 1970